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Israel Under International Pressure Not To Attack Iran Alone

Report: U.S. to Scale Down Military Exercise with Israel

According to Time magazine, the United States has significantly scaled down a planned joint military exercise with Israel, most likely because of disagreements on how to deal with Iran's nuclear ambitions. Citing "well-placed sources in both countries", the magazine said Washington was slashing by more than two-thirds the number of US troops going to Israel, and reducing the number and potency of missile interception systems that will be used in the exercise dubbed Austere Challenge 12, scheduled for October. Instead of approximately 5,000 US troops, the Pentagon will send between 1,200 and 1,500. Patriot anti-missile systems will arrive in Israel as planned, but the crews to operate them will not, according to the report.

Instead of two Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense warships, the new plan calls for sending just one, and even the remaining vessel is listed as a "maybe", the report said. Basically what the Americans are saying is, "We don't trust you," a senior Israeli military official was quoted by Time as saying. Time said the official explanation was budget restrictions.

The reductions coincided with growing tensions between the administrations of President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about Israel's threats to launch an airstrike on Iran over its nuclear program. Israeli officials quoted in the national media later insisted the Pentagon's decision had nothing to do with any differences between Obama and Netanyahu over Iran. [AFP]

Israel is facing growing international pressure not to attack Iran unilaterally, with the United States in particular making clear its firm opposition to any such strike.

Recent rhetoric by Israeli leaders that time is running out to halt Iran's contested nuclear program has raised concern that military action might be imminent, despite repeated calls from abroad to give sanctions and diplomacy more time to work.

***"I don't want to be
complicit if Israel
chooses to do it"***

General Martin Dempsey,
Chairman, U.S. Joint Chiefs
of Staff, speaking on the
possibility of a unilateral
Israeli strike on Iranian
nuclear facilities.

The U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Martin Dempsey, has always cautioned against a go-it-alone approach, but he appeared to up the ante recently by saying Washington did not want to be blamed for any Israeli initiative. "I don't want to be complicit if they (Israel) choose to do it," Dempsey was quoted as saying by Britain's Guardian newspaper, suggesting that he would view an Israeli attack as reprehensible or illegal. He went on to repeat that although Israel could delay Iran's nuclear project, it would not

destroy it. He said that unilateral action might unravel a strong international coalition that has applied progressively stiff sanctions on Iran. "This could be undone if Iran was attacked prematurely," he was quoted as saying.

While Tehran says its nuclear program is peaceful, Western powers believe it is trying to produce an atomic bomb. Israel, believed to have the only nuclear arsenal in the Middle East, views a nuclear-armed Iran as a threat to its existence.

Adding to the sense of urgency, the U.N. International Atomic Energy Agency reported recently Iran had doubled the number of uranium enrichment centrifuges in an underground bunker, showing its desire to expand its nuclear work.

Israel's vice prime minister Moshe Yaalon said he feared Iran did not believe it faced a real military threat from the outside world because of mixed messages from foreign powers. "We have an exchange of views, including with our friends in the United States, who in our opinion, are in part responsible for this feeling in Iran," he said recently in an interview with an Israeli radio station.

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“There are many cracks in the ring closing tighter on Iran. We criticize this,” he said, also singling out U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for having recently traveled to Tehran.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said he will speak out about the dangers of Iran in his upcoming address to the U.N. General Assembly in New York. He is also expected to hold talks with President Obama during his visit. A senior Israeli official told Reuters that Netanyahu would be looking for a firm pledge of U.S. military action if Iran does not back down. However, the meeting might well be icy. Israel’s top-selling daily, Yedioth Ahronoth, reported that there had been an “unprecedented” and “angry” exchange between Netanyahu and the U.S. ambassador in Tel Aviv earlier this month over Iran.

Quoting a source who was present at the meeting, Netanyahu had criticized Obama for not doing enough to stop Iran. The U.S. ambassador Daniel Shapiro took exception and accused the prime minister of distorting Obama’s position. The prime minister’s office declined to comment on the report and there was no initial response from the U.S. embassy.

Adding to the growing chorus of concern facing Netanyahu, Haaretz newspaper reported that German Chancellor Angela Merkel had recently delivered a “harsh message” to Netanyahu, telling him to hold off on any attack plans. The German embassy in Tel Aviv declined comment. Israeli officials have repeatedly said that a growing array of sanctions against Iran are not having any impact on the Tehran leadership and believe they will only back down in the face of a credible threat of military action. However, Netanyahu faces an uphill task persuading his own military and inner circle of the wisdom of a unilateral strike. Political sources told Reuters an ultra-orthodox party in his coalition was opposed to war. [Reuters]

Dead Sea, Mt Everest Paired on Joint Stamp of Israel and Nepal

Nepal and Israel have jointly launched a commemorative stamp featuring the highest point on earth, Mount Everest, and the lowest, the Dead Sea, to celebrate bilateral ties.



The stamps were released in simultaneous functions in Katmandu and Jerusalem. The idea of bringing together the two extremes was conceived in Israel. “We were thinking about the subject of the stamp and because I had been to Nepal and seen the mountains, I decided we should have Mount Everest, the highest place on earth and the Dead Sea, the lowest place on earth on it,” said Yaron Razon, director of Israel’s Philatelic Services.

The governments hailed it as a marker of their longstanding relationship. “Nepal was one of the first Asian countries to recognize the state of Israel when it came into existence 64 years ago, and we have never forgotten that friendship,” said Hanan Goder Goldberger, the Israeli ambassador to Nepal.

Israel has launched joint stamps with 15 other countries including France, Canada, Austria, China and The Vatican. The stamps are priced at thirty-five Nepali rupees and five shekels in Israel. [The Hindu]

New Study Ranks Israeli Schools Among Best in World

The 2012 Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) was recently released and for the first time three Israeli universities were ranked in the top 100 globally. The study is compiled by researchers at the



Shanghai Jiao Tong University in China.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem (pictured) ranked 53rd-best, with the Technion-Israel Institute of Technol-

ogy and Weizmann Institute of Science placing 78th and 93rd, respectively. Tel Aviv University just missed the cut for the top 100. Harvard University topped the list this year, as it has every year since the ARWU rankings were first published in 2003. Of the top 20 schools, only 3 were outside the United States.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, also fared exceptionally well in several individual categories. It ranked 16th in the world in mathematics, as well as 27th in computer science. Said Hebrew University President Prof. Menahem Ben-Sasson in an interview with The Jerusalem Post, “I am proud that several of Israel’s research universities are ranked among the world’s top achievers in this important international ranking, and that once again the Hebrew University of Jerusalem has been ranked the leader in Israel.” (Sidenote: Natalie Portman is an alumnus of Hebrew University.) [Israelli.org]